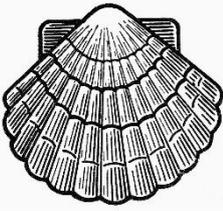


Sutton Benger Church Trail – Answer Sheet



The Font is where water is kept for baptism – the word comes from the Latin *fons* which means 'source of living water'. Baptism is the **start of the Christian journey**, so a font is usually near the entrance to a church. It is a scalloped design. A scallop shell is often used to pour the water at baptism and is a Christian **symbol of pilgrimage**. The font is originally Norman but was restored and lime washed in the early 1960's by Rev JAG Haslam, to lighten the church.

FUN FACT: There is a loud gurgling when the water is drained out!



Did you spot this late 15th century embroidery? Panels from vestments (*special robes worn by vicars*) were stitched together as an altar cloth over 400 years ago. It would have been very brightly coloured, but exposure to light has muted these colours. It was in use up to the 1880s & restored in the 1980s.

The Green Man is of remarkable size and quality, described as '*probably the finest of British green men*' and '*perhaps one of the great works of art of Western Europe*'. The Green Man is a 'spewing' head with leaves coming out of the mouth, he has an expressive face - the 4 birds pecking at the hawthorn berries are an unusual feature. It is famous, with people visiting from all over the world to see it. Dated as being **around 1300** (Pevsner) but it may have been refashioned during the renovations in 1850. It is a mystery why it is in this country church.

The Green Man is an archetypal (*recurrent motif*) image found across Western Europe, Asia and North Africa but his meaning has been lost in time. Originating from pagan times, maybe he was the Guardian of the woods where a holy site was established. He is the essence of life and growth, a symbol of fruitfulness. When Christianity came to the British Isles pagan images were often brought into church to be 'made safe'. **The cycle of death/resurrection and rebirth linked with the Green Man is also a key feature of the Christian faith.**

Today The Green Man reminds us of humanity's interdependence with the natural world as we grapple with the current ecological challenges. Christians are working to heal and restore their relationship with God's Creation – **Sutton Benger Church is actively engaged in the Eco Church scheme run by A Rocha UK.**

The Piscina comes from the Latin word meaning '*reservoir of water*' (and literally means fishpond!). It is a niche in the wall, like a shallow stone basin, often with a drain hole. It is near the altar so the priest can wash the communion vessels during the service.



The Trinity window symbolises God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. It expresses the way Christians relate to God: worshipping the Father, following the example of Jesus and inspired each day by the Holy Spirit who lives in each and every one of us.



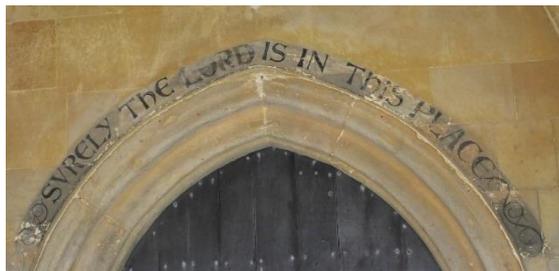
There are several stained-glass windows telling stories from the Bible – **can you find the one with Jesus knocking at a door?** Or Jesus healing a little girl? Or the one encouraging us to care for people who are hungry and thirsty?

Did you spot this hidden angel? If not, go and look near the pulpit!

The Empty Niche in the Lady Chapel (south aisle)

Before the English Civil War there would have been **statues** in this niche. These were removed and destroyed by the Roundhead soldiers and by other Puritan iconoclasts (*destroyers of images used in religious worship*) in 16th and 17th century. There was a strong non-conformist community in Sutton Benger and surrounding villages. Several generations of the Quaker Fry family lived in the village, among them John Fry, whose son Joseph founded the Bristol chocolate and cocoa business which became J. S. Fry & Sons.

It is said that the original stained-glass windows were destroyed by the Parliamentarians, who often stabled their horses in churches, and had a nearby garrison in Malmesbury in the 1640's. **Did you spot this window opposite the Green Man?** Some fragments of medieval glass were salvaged and preserved in this window.



The Door - When the church was built hundreds of years ago the door was made in proportion to the size of the whole building, according to architectural conventions – it inspired **a sense of the greatness of God**. Today the large door is a sign of welcoming everyone in; it allows wedding parties and coffins easy entrance; and it is solid and

permanent, reminding us that the Christian faith has been an important part of Sutton Benger life for well over 1000 years.

There used to be lettering inside the church too, much of which was lime washed over in the 1960's. **Can you spot this remaining one on one of the pillars inside?**



We hope you enjoyed spending time in this place of reflection and stillness.

Before you explore the churchyard, have a look at the Porch. Sir Harold Brakspear described it as '*a little gem of the 15th century*'. It was added many years after the church was originally built and may have come from nearby Bradenstoke Priory following Henry VIII's Dissolution of the Monasteries. **If you look at the apex of the roof you will see it looks squashed against the main building, with a little chunk cutaway to make it fit.**

1. The War memorial was designed by Sir Harold Brakspear in 1920 to record the names of the servicemen of the village who died during both World Wars. Each year villagers still gather on Remembrance Sunday to remember the huge **sacrifice** made by all those who have given their lives in the service of their country.



The crucifixion is important for Christians, who believe that God **sacrificed** Jesus to atone for the sins of humanity. It reminds us that God is alongside us in the pain and suffering of this world; that Jesus defeated evil and triumphed over sin & death. The cross is also a symbol of hope, forgiveness and reconciliation as people work for peace following conflict, learning to show tolerance & understanding of former enemies.

2. Scratch Dial - on the wall to the east of the porch you can see 'scratch dials'. These were a simple form of a sun dial – before clocks and watches, villagers needed **to know the times of services**. In 1783 it was noted that rather than the normal two regular Sunday services, in Sutton Benger only one was held at 2pm. This fitted better with the lives of the villagers who mostly made their living from dairy farming. There are traces of two dials – it is thought that when the porch was added in the 1500s it cut off the afternoon sun, so another had to be cut.



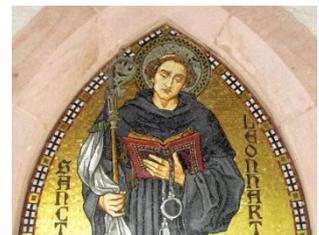
3. Window within a window - the bottom panel of the middle light of this window is filled by a miniature representation of the whole window, in the late Decorated Style (14th century). The **tracery** (stone ribs supporting the glass) is outstanding, and one reason the church is a grade two star building.

4. Flying Pig – An affectionate name for this huge gargoyle which projects around 4 feet from the wall. Its purpose was to carry off surface water from the roofs, now it directs rain into drainpipes. **See how over time water erosion had made the mouth larger?**



All Saint's Church – since the 17th century our church has been dedicated to All Saints. The feast of All Saints is marked on 1st November. A saint is a person who shows us about God – often Christian heroes and heroines. However, all God's people are saints because we learn about God from those around us. All Saints honours saints of all times and all places, known and unknown. **You might like to place a stone on the cairn in the churchyard and take a moment to remember someone special to you.**

In earlier times it is believed that the church was dedicated to St Leonard (sometimes the village is recorded as Sutton Leonard). St Leonard lived in 5th century France and was a well-known saint in Europe during 12th and 13th century. He is the patron saint of prisoners and was important to crusading knights who often returned home after rescue or ransom and gave gifts to churches. **Perhaps his statue was in the empty niche in the Lady Chapel?**



Details from Sutton Benger (from Saxon times to the dawn of the 21st century) by Kay Taylor, and Wiltshire Council's history pages. Some photographs used with permission of Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre. We are grateful to the Church Piece Charity for funding the printing costs., and the pupils of Sutton Benger School for their help in creating this trail.